

David Cox, RWS



A distant view of Lancaster with Morecambe Bay in the distance

Reference: 10866

Dimensions:

Height: 29.60 cm / 11⁵/₈ in

Width: 39 cm / 15³/₈ in

Signed I.l.: David Cox., watercolour over traces of pencil with touches of pen and black ink on buff paper

29.6 x 39 cm; 11 ³/₄ x 15 ³/₈ inches

Provenance: Agnew's, London, 126th annual exhibition, March 1999, no. 63; The Flannery collection, UK, and by descent until 2018.

This very freely drawn watercolour represents a transitional stage in the development of the important theme of 'Peace and War', one of David Cox's major subjects. Two local men, one seated, one standing, watch a small troop of soldiers on the march in an extensive sweeping landscape under a huge sky, with Lancaster Castle in the middle distance and the waters of Morecambe Bay beyond. Unusually for Cox there is not much pencil underdrawing.

Cox's preoccupation with military activity during the very unsettled years of the 1830s and 1840s manifests itself after

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his 1838 trip with his wife to Seabrook, near Hythe in Kent, for six weeks. The artist made sketching trips along the coast of Kent, including one to Lympne, five miles from Hythe, resulting in Peace and War: Lympne Castle (c. 1838, Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery).

The present work, which is similar in style and feel to the Lympne watercolour, presumably dates from the same time, but shows the composition reversed and the distant focus of Lancaster Castle as in Lancaster: Peace and War, 1842 (Art Institute of Chicago). Most of Cox's numerous 'Peace and War' subjects are set at Lancaster rather than Lympne and have more developed references to 'War' than the small troop of riders seen here on the top of the hill on the left.

The theme is repeatedly treated by Cox at this period, resulting in his 1838 exhibits at the Society of Painters in Water-colours in London, Rocky Scene – Infantry on the March and Stirling Castle – Cavalry on the March and the 1839 Cavalry on the March. In 1848 the first work to be entitled Peace and War (Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, National Museums Liverpool) was exhibited at the Society of Painters in Water-colours.